

Camborne - Redruth Urban District Council.

MEDICAL OFFICER'S REPORT for the year 1941.

All our present efforts of mind and body are directed to one purpose only and there is neither the time to review nor the inclination to read a lengthy report upon municipal activities of the past year. Our thoughts are upon the present and upon the future. We may have time to look back later. This report must again be short.

There were 784 births in the area, (394 males and 390 females) but many of these were of parents not normally resident in the area.

There were 213 deaths. (94 males and 119 females.)

INFECTIOUS DISEASE.

Measles and Whooping Cough were prevalent during the early part of the year but the epidemic was a mild one. During the latter part of the year there were a number of cases of jaundice (Epidemic Hepatitis.)

Notifications during the year.

Measles	...	...	573
Whooping Cough	...	...	110
Diphtheria	...	...	64
Pneumonia	...	...	49
Streptococcal Infections			
Erysipelas	...	23	} 39
Scarlet Fever	...	15	
Meningitis	...	1	
Cerebro-Spinal-Fever	...	...	9
Puerperal Pyrexia	...	...	11
Encephalitis	1
Para-typhoid	6
Ophthalmia neonatorum	7
Tuberculosis	39
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Isolation Hospitals.

Our three Isolation Hospitals have together 36 beds and the principal hospital is at Camborne.

There were admitted to these hospitals, during the year, 231 patients. (Camborne 121, Redruth 61, Illogan 49.) With the exception of three, all the patients were discharged well.

One child died of cerebro-spinal-fever, one of tuberculous meningitis and one with diphtheria complicated with pneumonia.

The number of patient-days was 5,728 (whereas in the pre-war year 1938, the number was 325 only.)

Diphtheria carriers. By means of a specially installed Ultra Violet Light plant yielding rays of great intensity (Water-cooled Kromeyer) a persistent effort was made to rid carriers of the diphtheria germ which they were harbouring in nose or throat. Applications of light into the nasal cavity or in contact with the tonsils was made daily. In this work the sister-in-charge shewed great capability and her assistance was invaluable. The results, however, were disappointing and, in the end, these local applications were discontinued. We, however, still employ ultra-violet-light for general body irradiation.

Better results with carriers were obtained by the use of a snuff containing one of the recently discovered drugs (sulphathiazole, 10% in powdered carbonate of magnesium.) This powder was snuffed up each nostril three or four times a day. Even young children soon became accustomed to using it and I am satisfied that it is so far the best agent we have for treating diphtheria carriers.

Centralisation.

It is suggested that the functions of all local Isolation Hospitals should be transferred to one central County Isolation Hospital, situated at Truro. This would imply the closure of our three Isolation Hospitals, at Camborne, Redruth and Illogan. Now these three hospitals have served a very useful purpose, especially during the war period. Consider the number of patients dealt with. In the pre-war years 1934 and 1935 the number of patients admitted was certainly small, being 8 and 29 respectively, but in 1940 the admissions numbered 126, and in 1941 they were 231.

There has been no case of cross infection from one patient to another in the hospitals.

We have fever hospital trained nurses constantly on duty.

The patients are under the uniform treatment of one medical officer.

Facilities for pathological tests are exceptionally convenient since the medical officer in charge of the patients is also the pathologist for the Redruth Clinical Laboratory.

Our local hospitals therefore fulfil the essential requirements of isolation hospitals. They have also the added advantage of being within the area and there-

fore readily accessible to patients, their relatives and friends. This advantage is one that is much valued.

Furthermore these local hospitals of ours have a potential value as reserve hospital, equipped and in running order, and available in times of epidemic as overflow hospitals when the central hospital is filled.

With the return of peace we must expect the number of admissions to our hospitals to fall again. It might then be financially extravagant to keep these hospitals permanently and efficiently staffed as at present. The advantages then of having a central County Isolation Hospital in full running order would be very great, even though it be situated some 10 or 12 miles away from the patients' home, and outside our area.

I conclude, therefore, that for the duration of the war, the interests of the public would be best served if we retained our local Isolation Hospitals as at present managed and equipped, but that when the post-war time of reconstruction arrives we should do well to lend a willing ear to any reasonable proposal for the centralisation of the infectious diseases hospital service at an institution at Truro.

Immunisation against Diphtheria.

The number of immunising doses given during the year was 11,957, of which 6,076 were primary injections and 4,881 secondary or completing doses. These injections were all given either in the Council Chambers or in the schools, without cost to the Council. Immunisation is still available to the public at Camborne on the 1st Friday of the month, and at Redruth on the 1st Tuesday of the month, at 10 a.m.

Laboratory Facilities.

One of the principal advantages of a local laboratory is that it is readily accessible and can furnish results more quickly than one further removed. The more quickly the result of a laboratory test is available the greater, as a rule, is its value. It is chiefly in this matter of producing results quickly that the Redruth Clinical Laboratory is so useful to the area.

During the year under review 3,400 specimens were reported upon in this laboratory.

Scabies.

This troublesome infestation though most frequently met with among poorer folk is occasionally found in all classes regardless of station, wealth or personal cleanliness. It is being dealt with very efficiently at the Redruth Hostel where 600 persons so infested were treated as in-patients during the year. The success of this hostel is due to the remarkable tact, ability and personality of Mrs. Dempsey, the matron.

Arrangements are also advanced for the treatment of adults infested with scabies, at the Redruth Isolation Hospital.

Typhus Fever.

No case of this disease has arisen or been met with in the area. Should a case arise the patient would at once be removed to the Redruth Isolation Hospital which would then be entirely reserved for the treatment of patients infected with this disease.

MILK.

Samples of milk have been collected monthly from delivery vans and analysed in the Redruth Clinical Laboratory. Of the 144 samples examined 13 failed to contain the standard 3% of fat. The milk in general was remarkably rich in fat though not so much so as in the pre-war period. Too many samples, however, shew lack of cleanliness. In some cases where a sample was taken from the vendor's delivery van and found not to satisfy the usual tests for purity (Coli test and Methylene Blue test.) samples taken at the producer's farm satisfied these tests entirely. Obviously the fault here lies with the vendor, and not with the producer.

MEAT AND FOOD.

As in the year 1940 slaughtering has been conducted in six central slaughterhouses, two of them for local supply, two for export, and two bacon factories.

The number of animals slaughtered during the year was 67,730 as against 91,330 in the previous year.

The number of carcasses condemned as unfit for human consumption was 213 and the number of parts of other carcasses condemned was 12,746.

The total weight of meat condemned during the year was 80 tons 19 cwt. 10 lbs., and in the previous year, 1940 it was 93 tons 17 cwt. 53 lbs.

The office of Meat Inspector is no sinecure. The work of the Meat and Food Inspector in this area is a task requiring knowledge, experience and strength of character, qualities which our Meat and Food Inspector, Mr. Nairn, possesses in an exceptionally high degree.

The number of carcasses of cattle condemned, namely 100, may be high compared with the number condemned in the previous year, which was 34. This is largely due to the system adopted during the year, of culling all unprofitable cattle, as recommended by the ministry.

Of cattle slaughtered 2.59% were condemned as against 0.02% in the previous year. Sheep, 0.265% condemned as against 0.015%. Calves, 0.132% condemned as against 0.031%. Swine, 0.155% condemned as against 0.028%.

The decrease in the total slaughtering is accounted for chiefly by the lesser number of pigs slaughtered, namely 46,000 as against 69,000 in the previous year. On the other hand, the number of cattle slaughtered has actually increased to almost double, being 3,036 as against 1,809 in the previous year.

Central Abattoir and Municipal Piggery.

The following paragraphs are taken verbatim from the report of the Meat and Food Inspector, and I may add that I am in full agreement with the opinions therein expressed.

“ We have now had two years’ experience of the present system of modified centralisation of slaughtering and I have no hesitation in stating that it has been a great improvement on the old system wherein we had numerous premises, good, bad and indifferent, scattered throughout the urban area. Under those circumstances it was impossible to examine all the animals slaughtered.”

“ I suggest that the time has arrived when the Council should prepare and consider a scheme for complete centralisation, with perhaps the exception of the two bacon factories, so that this scheme can be put into operation immediately the war ends and thereby avoid the relicensing of all the old buildings formerly used as slaughterhouses.”

“ May I again add to the suggested scheme for centralisation of slaughtering, the recommendation I submitted last year, namely, that of combining with this scheme for a **Municipal Piggery**.”

“ I have no doubt whatever that a scheme for pig breeding combined with the existing system of collecting and sterilising all kitchen waste, and the inclusion of certain by-products from the slaughterhouses would prove to be a considerable source of revenue.”

“ In this connection I would like to point out that at present insufficient use is being made of the blood from the slaughterhouses in this area. The attention of the Ministry might perhaps be drawn to this waste of valuable material.”

“ During the last two months of the year all the slaughtering of animals for the Hayle area of West Penwith has been taking place in Camborne, and is continuing so.”

“ I have at various times during the year, examined consignments of frozen beef, mutton and other frozen products, and have invariably found these satisfactory.” “ In this connection I would like to record the co-operation afforded me by the Wholesale Meat Sales Association’s (W.M.S.A.) Depot Managers at Redruth and Camborne.”

HOUSING.

Despite the building of numerous Council houses since the termination of the last war there remains a general shortage of houses in the area and cases of overcrowding are numerous.

The health, happiness and social behaviour of people are closely associated with the conditions under which they live and where housing conditions are deplor-

able there we have the seeds of ill-health, there people grow quarrelsome and unhappy and social conduct deteriorates.

Some of us are not fully conscious of this evil, which though less prevalent than it once was, is still in our midst. If we were, we should stir ourselves more actively in search of a remedy. No doubt much cannot be done until the war is over and the time for reconstruction arrives. Something however could be done.

I am inclined to believe that too much is being asked of our Housing Committee and I wish that it were possible for the subject of rent collection and of defaulting tenants to be the concern of the Finance Committee and that the Housing Committee were a sub-committee of the Committee of Public Health.

Is the best use being made of our Council Houses to meet this evil of overcrowding? Are there not Council Houses where the number of rooms available is in excess of the number required by those inhabiting them? I commend this subject of overcrowding to the Council as a matter for their serious consideration.

Centralisation of the Offices of the Public Health Department.

These offices will, in future, be under one roof with other Council Offices, at Camborne.

SANITARY INSPECTION OF THE AREA.

Many additional duties have been performed by our Sanitary Inspectors in connection with the war, their work has been more onerous than before and it has been physically impossible for them to conduct as fully as in ordinary times, the usual sanitary inspection of the area. I would like to avail myself of the present opportunity of expressing my appreciation of their ever willing co-operation, no trouble is ever too much for them.

Salvage.

Our salvage service has collected paper, scrap metal, rags and bones, also kitchen waste. Much has been collected but there is room for improvement. It is not easy to organise and conduct this large scale salvage collection and disposal and at the same time carry out many other duties and our Sanitary Inspectors have fought valiantly with this difficult problem. We need more and better transport facilities; some of our lorries break down too frequently. We require a Salvage Officer or Foreman to busy himself with the duties of salvage collection, and I earnestly hope that the Council will appoint such an officer.

Kitchen Waste.

During the year a depot was opened at Carn Brea to which kitchen waste was carried. The depot is furnished with two boilers each delivering steam under pressure. There are 28 milk churns each of 12 gallon capacity, filled with kitchen waste and a portion of clean offal from the slaughterhouses in the area. Into each of these churns, and reaching to the bottom, is a steam jet delivering superheated

steam from one of the boilers. The contents of the churns are in this way boiled and sterilised.

The sterilised product is delivered to pig farmers to whom it is sold at 60/- a ton.

Provided the offal is collected at the proper time, as instructed, and has been cleaned at the slaughterhouse, a very satisfactory mixture is produced and we have a balanced food of high nutritional value for pig feeding. Needless to say the organisation of this process is not without difficulty and any mismanagement is likely to cause trouble and complaint. The offal must be perfectly fresh.

WATER.

The water supply of the area has been plentiful. There has been no water-borne disease attributable to any of our water sources. The few cases of paratyphoid that occurred were traceable to a source outside the area.

All sources have been analysed frequently.

The water supplied by the Camborne Water Company, as taken from the delivery pipes in the town, like the water supplied from the Redruth reservoir, is bacteriologically pure. (Class I. i.e., containing less than one bacillus coli per 100 ml.)

These waters are automatically chlorinated before reaching the consumer.

There has been a breakdown at Filtrick, one of the sources supplying the Redruth Reservoir, this is being repaired.

The small district of Mount Ambrose is supplied with water from a source above the reservoir, and this source is not yet chlorinated, it is however bacteriologically pure.

The quality of the water consumed from the many wells, springs and chutes in the area, is variable. About one half of these waters are graded Class I. highly satisfactory, one quarter of them are graded Class IV. unsatisfactory, and the remainder fall into Class II or Class III.

Warning notices are affixed to every source where the quality of the water has been found upon analysis to be suspicious or unsatisfactory. Chlorination has been advised and the method to be employed is explained.

Since piped supplies have been chlorinated there has occasionally been complaint that the water has a slightly objectionable taste which was not observed before chlorination. This taste can be removed by the addition of a small quantity of hyposulphate of soda (ordinary photographer's hypo.) a small crystal of hypo added to an average sized jug of water usually suffices.

Many of the pipes in the area are old and encrusted with rust which sometimes gains access to the water from household taps and then leaves a deposit.

Chlorination will cause the death and decay of low forms of vegetable life that may have existed in the old pipes especially about the junctions between adjacent pipes, this may temporarily lend an odour or taste to the water. The best remedy for this is to allow the water to flow freely to flush the pipes.

C. RIVERS,

(Medical Officer of Health).